De Gaulle and Algeria, P. 4

Mr. K's All-or-Nothing Arms Plan May Hide New Obstacles to Agreement, See Page 3

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Nikita Khrushchev, On Closer Acquaintance

Writing midway in the Khrushchev visit, while he is en route to Iowa, I would say that the net effect of his tour will be about the same as the effect on Americans of a visit to Russia.

Those Americans who go to Russia with right-of-centre preconceptions tend to come back with a more friendly, more human conception of it; the Soviet Union, they can see, is not the "slave society" of State Department rhetoric. On the other hand most of those Americans who go to Russia with left-of-centre preconceptions tend to come back appalled by its dinginess, its low living standards, its stuffy atmosphere of conformity; the Soviet Union, they can see, is hardly the "workers' paradise" of Communist propaganda.

The visit, unless there is some striking change before this issue appears, is likely to have a similar effect. Mr. Khrushchev's sense of humor, his gusto, his very failings, cannot help but break up some hostile stereotypes. On the other hand, for those of us who believe deeply in peace and co-existence, the Soviet Premier has focussed attention on aspects of his character which make us realize with a pungent immediacy that negotiation with him will not be easy, nor a really peaceful co-existence readily achieved.

Not Good Salesmanship

Indeed in some respects the trip already seems too long. In some ways Mr. Khrushchev has turned out surprisingly to be a poor salesman. The most elementary rule of salesmanship is not to offend the customers. Mr. Khrushchev has hardly arrived in a new city before he is telling the Mayor or the reception committee that ours will soon be a second-rate or third-rate country. This is no way to make friends.

Mr. Khrushchev is also wiping out good first impressions in another way. He is constantly talking of what a plain spoken and undiplomatic man he is. But when people speak to him plainly, he flies off the handle. If he wanted to be reserved and dignified, people would be reserved and dignified with him. But since he affects the breezy and democratic, he cannot fall back huffily on his dignity when discussion becomes straightforward. Mr. Khrushchev is creating the impression that he likes to dish it out, but he can't take it.

Part of this thin-skinned quality is a product of the Soviet system. Mr. Khrushchev has grown up in a society where the rulers have lost the habit of persuasion. For many years, except in the highest and innermost councils, the "line" has been determined from above and ladled out uniformly by a completely controlled press. "They" decide how much the people shall know and what the people shall think. The Russians are a very democratic people in their manners, their instincts and their approach to life but their government is a hierarchical bureaucracy in which each echelon expects the one below it to obey orders without question. This does not make them easy to get along with, except on their own terms.

We had been told that Mr. Khrushchev was a formidable debater, but he seems to be more adept at evading than at meeting issues. This is particularly striking on the question of censorship. In his speech to the Economic Club in New York he protested against the view "that the policy of co-existence we are offering to you means in effect the establishment of a 'disunited world'." Mr. Khrushchev said that "in reality it is exactly the opposite that we want to achieve." Peaceful co-existence, he declared, "implies ever increasing economic and cultural intercourse between peoples." But when he was asked afterwards why his Government did not allow foreign magazines and newspapers to be distributed freely in the Soviet Union, and why it censored "the dispatches of American correspondents in the Soviet Union," he complained that he was a guest of the President, that this was interference in internal affairs, that he was an old sparrow and could not be muddled, that we also engaged in "jamming" and that we had not allowed Paul Robeson to sing abroad. This series of non-sequiturs does not add to Mr. Khrushchev's lustre as a debater. How does one have "cultural intercourse" without exchanging ideas?

The Legion of Decency Acquires A Left Wing

When Walter Reuther at the labor dinner in San Francisco pressed the same question, "how come you oppose a free flow of ideas?" Mr. Khrushchev did an imitation of the girls he had seen doing the "can-can" in Hollywood and said, "This is what you call freedom—freedom for the girls to show their backsides. To us it's pornography. The culture of people who want pornography. It's capitalism that makes the girls that way. . . ." This is difficult to characterize politely. It should qualify Mr. Khrushchev for the left wing of the Legion of Decency. When Mr. Reuther persisted, "That has nothing to do with our question of why not a free flow of ideas between our countries." Mr. Khrushchev retorted, "why don't you want to trade with us? The sausage tastes the same in all countries." This was not brilliant, either.

Mr. Khrushchev on closer inspection has showed himself to be both a conceited and a limited man. He reminds me in some ways of Mr. Truman. Mr. Truman is also a self-made man whose earlier humility soon turned into a vast conceit. Both men show that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Both are inordinately proud of their half-baked history. Mr. Khrushchev's constant references to how capitalism replaced feudalism recall Mr. Truman's appeals to history in their ostentation and their callow over-simplification. The stereotypes in Mr. Khrushchev's mind are those of a kind of

(*Continued on Page Two*)

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Serious Misconceptions About American Society

(*Continued from Page One*)

schoolboy third-grade Marxism, and their variance from reality has hurt his mission and endangers the cause of co-existence.

I first felt this on listening to his address before the Economics Club in New York. This was an arrogant speech which made enemies when he might so easily have made friends. Here were a group of leading American capitalists gathered to treat him as an honored guest. Their dinner demonstrated their readiness for co-existence. In arranging it, they had shown themselves quite different from the leaders of the American labor movement, who either flatly refused to sit down with him or arranged a meeting only in order to lecture him. Mr. Khrushchev, by turning on his charm, could easily have won that Economics Club audience. Instead he read a cold, boastful and unfriendly speech.

The Stereotypes and the Realities

This speech had inferiority complex written all over it. It also showed the effects of Communist stereotypes. Mr. Khrushchev seems to have felt that he was facing an audience of capitalist monsters. He told them he had no horns, but he could not shake off the Communist demonology which put horns on *them*. His message sounded like a warning that they had better be friendly to Russia while there was yet time because they would soon be beaten. This engaging theme was topped off by a patronizing prediction. "Although I do not claim to be a prophet," Mr. Khrushchev said smugly, "I can say that some [business men] apparently will have a few bitter moments when they realize that they have incorrectly assessed the situation and erred in their calculations. If they are business-like and clever people, then, as the experience of the socialist countries has shown, after the transition to the new social system, the American people will give them an opportunity to apply their knowledge, their energy and their abilities." This left a bad taste, especially since many of the capitalists at that dinner represented the only forces which have been pressuring the White House for relaxation of international tension and a slowdown in the arms race. It is unfortunately true that the only class which is striving at all against the arms race in America today is that section of the capitalist class which is (1) concerned with fiscal solvency and (2) much too confident of its own ability in mass production and distribution to be afraid of peaceful competition with the Soviet Union. The trade union movement, by contrast, is afraid that any letup in the arms race will bring unemployment. The worried worker, not the bloodthirsty capitalist, is the big political obstacle. This reality, so unlike Marxist stereotypes, has yet to get across to Mr. Khrushchev.

Only One Road to Socialism

There is a second and more fundamental stereotype which blocks peaceful co-existence. This is related to the formula of different roads to socialism which Mr. Khrushchev seemed ready to accept in 1956. If one conceives of the world in terms of black-and-white, here something called "capitalism" and there something called "socialism,' two diametrically opposed systems, then peaceful co-existence between them is really only possible on the rather unfriendly basis of a world split in two, with the "socialist" world quarantined off against the "bad" ideas coming from the "capitalist" world. But if one recognizes that "creeping socialism" is the hallmark of our time, that socialism has been advancing everywhere, that all countries are moving toward it in their own way, in accordance with their own past and traditions, then instead of a sharply contrasted world of black-and-white we have a medley of systems in which peaceful co-existence and mutual borrowing of ideas between countries becomes easy. But Mr. Khrushchev seems to be as afraid to say anything good about capitalism as the average politician in this country is to say anything good about communism. Indeed it was curious to notice how often, as if with one eye nervously on the Politbureau, Mr. Khrushchev assured his various audiences that he could not be converted to capitalism.

Mr. Khrushchev went out to Hyde Park to pay tribute to the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt. But if he had the foggiest notion of what FDR represents in American history, Mr. Khrushchev could hardly have said at the luncheon given him in New York that he could see no difference between present-day American capitalism and the capitalism described by Marx. To see our present society as no different from the ugly horror of mid-Victorian industrialism described in *Das Kapital* can lead to all kinds of Communist delusions: of an American working class living in increasing misery, of an American capitalist class forced desperately into widening imperialist adventure to make up for the dwindling market at home. Something like this is served up in the Soviet press and Mr. Khrushchev seems to be affected by it. The American worker today has a lot more than his chains to lose.

A Claim to A Monopoly on Truth

To recognize this would smooth the path of peaceful co-existence. On the other hand, it would shake the philosophical foundations of the Soviet world, its simple-minded claim to a monopoly of the truth. If there are different roads to socialism, then the way is cleared for modifications of the Soviet system in satellite countries like Hungary and the Soviet Union itself. But then the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can no longer claim to be the possessor of the only sole truth, and of the right to censor and bar all other ideas in order to protect this truth. Here we come to the foundations of the closed society, and the closed society is a very real hindrance to peaceful co-existence.

The black-and-white view degenerates easily into the mentality revealed by Mr. Khrushchev when the labor leaders who met with him in San Francisco asked about Hungary. "There was no interference," he said. "There was a counter-revolution, thugs and hooligans who received arms from outside and took power in Budapest." When Walter Reuther interjected, "Was Nagy a Fascist? I thought he was a Communist?", Mr. Khrushchev replied testily "Don't mix good things with dirt." The Hungarian revolt was not an uprising of thugs and hooligans; it began with Hungary's finest Communist intellectuals and the most advanced section of its working class. A man who talks in this coarse way is capable of repeating the same mistakes of bureaucratic blindness which provoked the Hungarian revolt in the first place. This is disturbing since one of the ways in which that new war nobody wants may be accidentally sparked is by a new uprising against the Russians.

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Was Mr. K. Saying No Inspection Without Total Pie-in-The-Sky Disarmament?

If Ike Had The Daring to Challenge Khrushchev

One of the silliest advertisements with which Mr. Khrushchev was greeted appeared on the back page of the *New York Times* the day before he unveiled his disarmament plan at the United Nations. The ad was headlined, "Let's Ask Mr. K. Why There's No Madison Avenue in Moscow." Madison Avenue, of course, was used as a symbol of advertising and public relations. But Mr. Khrushchev's speech demonstrated that Moscow *does* have a Madison Avenue.

This grandiose plan for total disarmament within four years was (in Madison Avenue language) a "snow job." It disappointed those of us who were naive enough to expect some genuine new initiative in the speech. It was a play to the simple-minded in the bleachers. The State Department was afraid to say so because it has been carrying on as phoney a series of maneuvers on disarmament for years. Mr. Khrushchev himself indicated that he didn't take his four year plan for universal disarmament too seriously by tacking on to it a medley of familiar limited steps his government was ready to negotiate "if at present due to certain reasons" the Western Powers are not ready for total disarmament.

No Mention of the Veto

Mr. Khrushchev's grand gesture of total disarmament in four years would have taken on completely new force if it were coupled with certain clear declarations. Had he said the Soviet Union was prepared under such conditions to allow inspections by a veto-free international enforcing organism, he would have impressed his audience at the UN General Assembly. There would have been real attention, too, if he had touched soberly upon the difficult political questions which need to be solved before nations would be willing to give up their armies. Putting aside for the moment the political questions which divide the American and Russian blocs, let us look at Kashmir, or the unsettled relations of Israel and the Arab States. The need for some kind of international mechanism to arbitrate and to enforce peace on these dangerous borders is obvious. That means an international police force. It means the beginning of a world government but none are more jealous than the Russians of that obsolete sovereignty which stands in the way.

If our government had the daring and the imagination it could seize the leadership and win the gratitude of mankind by challenging Mr. Khrushchev to join with it in an international commission to study the problem of how to police and govern a disarmed world. How are present barriers against the free movement of peoples and ideas to be handled? How could Communist planned societies be brought into one world system with the less closely controlled economies of Western Europe and the Americas? These are the questions which face us once we think of getting rid of armies. Joint study by an international body of savants might be useful. Would someone initiate it?

In the absence of some such initiative, little will come of Khrushchev's revival of Litvinov's old proposal of the 20's. Indeed one way to block progress on what is practical is to trot out the perfectionist impossible. Hidden in Mr. Khrushchev's speech is a hint that endangers progress already made. He seemed at one point to be saying that Russia could not agree to *any* measures of control and inspection unless there was total disarmament. Since total disarmament is likely to remain pie-in-the-sky, does that mean the Russians will not agree to the kind of limited inspection envisaged by the Geneva talks on cessation? "In the atmosphere of the 'cold war' and mutual suspicion," Mr. Khrushchev said, "no state, speaking seriously and not for propaganda, could reveal its military secrets." But no State is being asked to reveal all its military secrets and every State has an interest in cutting down suspicion and the arms race by consenting to some inspection in the interest of an agreement. Is there not a virtue in step-by-step progress with limited inspection for enforcement as a means of developing mutual confidence? Here we see the dangers in a grandiose all-or-nothing approach.

In proposing international agreement to divert savings on arms to the development of the newer countries, Mr. Khrushchev said "that in the question of economic aid it would not do to place on the same footing those who do not take part in the exploitation of former colonial countries, and never did, and those who continue without qualms to sap the natural wealth of the underdeveloped countries. It would be legal, and just, for the foreign exploiters to return if only a part of the riches which they have accumulated. . . ."

Who is going to decide how much was fairly paid in the past for processing and marketing Chilean copper or Arab oil and how much should be rebated? Who is to decide how much of the rebate is to finance new royal Cadillacs and how much development? What will Moscow say if counter-claims are filed on behalf of Polish coal or Hungarian uranium? We need only examine the practical questions involved to see that this passage in the Khrushchev speech was an excursion in demagogy inconsistent with better relations.

The Bursting of A Bubble

"The freedom and independence of Laos have been threatened by forces from outside its borders. . . ."
—Secretary Herter to the UN Gen'l Assembly, Sept. 17

"The degree to which that situation has been brought about entirely by the Pathet Lao, who were Communist sympathizers. . . . I don't know. I don't know that anybody knows the degree of complicity of the Vietminh. . . . I doubt whether we will get very much of a clarification unless either active warfare breaks out or this [UN] Commission can come in with very accurate findings."
—Herter to the UN Correspondents Ass'n, Sept. 22

"Vientiane, Sept. 22 (AP)—The Laotian government today banned correspondents from Sam Neua . . . charging 'some incorrect reports' on the actual situation there. . . . The government had claimed the border post of Sam Teu changed four times in five days of fierce fighting. Correspondents reported from the scene that Sam Teu was practically unscathed and quoted the local commander as saying that it had never been occupied by procommunist rebels."
—Washington Evening Star, Sept. 22

"Vientiane, Sept. 22 (AP)—The Laotian government disclosed today that it had avoided accusing Communist North Vietnam of aggression in documents put before the special United Nations fact-finding commission."
—New York Times, Sept. 23

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Will the Rebels, by A Counter-Offer, Force Negotiations on "Independence"?

De Gaulle Uses the Word on Algeria No Other Leader Could Have Uttered

When de Gaulle speaks, he makes all the other leaders of the great powers seem banal. His mind is as subtle and deceptively simple as his style. This deceptive simplicity was striking in his statement on Algeria.

De Gaulle said it was to the interest of all concerned that the question of Algeria's future should be answered "with no room for ambiguity." Without ambiguity, however, he would have no room for maneuver. His statement skillfully created new ambiguities, the most important of them his use of the term "independence."

This word, long awaited, was designed, on the eve of the UN General Assembly, to ward off a two-thirds vote against France. It was intended to create the impression that at last the Algerians would have a free choice.

Secession Into Hopeless Poverty

But the text showed de Gaulle was offering not independence for Algeria, but partition of the country. After the "regrouping and resettlement" of its people, the fertile seacoast and the territory traversed by the pipelines for Saharan oil could become part of France while the scrubby back country of mountain and desert would have "independence." Under these circumstances, as de Gaulle said, "secession would carry in its wake the most appalling poverty."

Partition flows logically for de Gaulle from his denial of Algerian nationhood. "Since the beginning of the world," he declared, "there has never been any true Algerian unity." This is so no longer. In Algeria, as in so many parts of Asia and Africa, colonialism awakened the counter-force of nationalism. The failure of France to keep past promises of equality to Algeria's diverse non-European peoples has given them a sense of common destiny; unity has been forged in rebellion.

That there is an Algeria was indeed implicit in de Gaulle's ironic treatment of the notion that Algeria may be fully integrated with France. The solution he obviously favors is a "Government of Algeria by Algerians . . . in narrow relationship with her [France] for economy, teaching, defense and foreign relations." But he would seek to dissolve the growing sense of nationhood by creating a Federal Algeria divided among various communities, "French, Arab, Kabylie, Mozabite. . . ." This would turn "self-determination" into a new variant of the classic "divide and rule" formula.

For this poor choice rebels who have fought against great odds with heroic valor for years are asked to lay down their arms. If they fear that in doing so "they will be yielding themselves up to justice," de Gaulle declared, "then it is entirely up to them to settle with the authorities the conditions for their unhindered return." This is not even the firm promise of an amnesty.

From the standpoint of the rebels, this is flim-flam. But the terrible necessities of French politics are forcing de Gaulle to play a game in which he must try to cajole and confuse not only the rebels but the headstrong French Army and the forces which brought him to power. It was a bitter moment for the Algiers mob to hear their slogan of "integration" shelved.

De Gaulle has uttered the word no other French leader could have used without being overthrown. "Independence," once said aloud, however ambiguously, is irreversible, an historic admission the rebel leaders can utilize to open a dialogue with France. By astute counter-offer, they can force de Gaulle into a negotiation he may privately desire but cannot publicly offer without losing control of the Army.

Still A Basis for Peaceful Settlement

There remain grounds for settlement of a war France cannot win, a war which is poisoning her political life, undermining her economy and endangering her ties with Black Africa. The leaders of the rebellion are still French-educated moderates who draw their inspiration not from Islam but from the revolutionary egalitarianism of France herself.

A North African federation of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco linked to France in freedom is still possible. Within its broad confines, the European settlers of Algeria could still avoid a tragedy. But only a few scant moments are left.

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